

Gorbachev Warns Estonia to Back Off

Kremlin Threatens Lithuania-Style Steps

By Michael Dobbs
Washington Post Foreign Service

MOSCOW, April 4—Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev has warned Estonia that it could face a Lithuanian-style crackdown unless it backs down from a constitutional confrontation with the Kremlin over the validity of Soviet laws, Estonian officials reported today.

Estonian President Arnold Ruutel said the Soviet leader called him Tuesday to express concern about moves toward secession by the tiny Baltic republic. The Estonian legislature formally passed a resolution Friday that described Soviet rule as illegal but stopped short of declaring independence.

"Gorbachev said that, if we flagrantly break union agreements, he as president will take the same measures that have been adopted in Lithuania," Ruutel told journalists after a meeting of the Estonian Supreme Soviet in Tallinn.

Gorbachev's warning to Estonia suggests that the Kremlin is concerned that the constitutional crisis posed by Lithuania's unilateral declaration of independence on March 11 could soon spill over to other parts of the Soviet Union. The Estonians had deliberately adopted a less direct approach to independence than Lithuania in the hope of avoiding a showdown with Moscow.

The resolution adopted by Es-

tonia's legislature said the republic had embarked on "a transition period" leading up to complete sovereignty. The resolution said that the Soviet annexation of Estonia in 1940 under the terms of a secret treaty with Nazi Germany had not disrupted "the continued existence of the Estonian republic *de jure*."

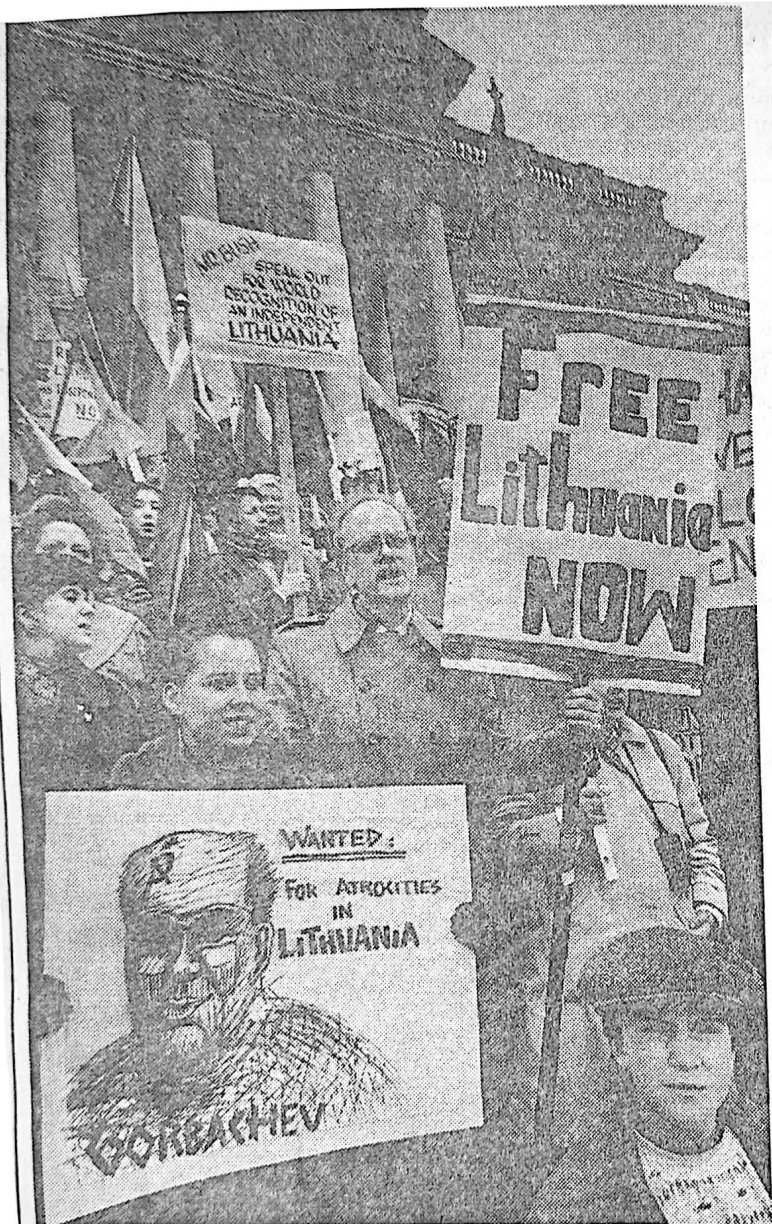
The Soviet Defense Ministry accused "separatist forces" in all three Baltic republics today of disrupting the spring call-up of young men into the Soviet army. It said that extremists, supported in many cases by local authorities, were calling for an organized boycott of the draft in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.

The military conscription of young Soviets is one of the most contentious issues between the Kremlin and the Baltic republics as they seek to restore their prewar independence. The Soviet armed forces rely on conscripts for the bulk of their manpower.

In an interview with the Communist Party newspaper Pravda earlier this week, Armed Forces Chief of Staff Mikhail Moiseyev said that the number of draft-dodgers had risen eightfold since 1985, when Gorbachev came to power. He singled out the Baltic and Transcaucasian republics—Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan—as the regions of greatest anti-military sentiment.

Despite a meeting yesterday be-

See SOVIET, A38, Col. 1



BY JAMES A. PARCELL—THE WASHINGTON POST

About 100 protesters gather on the steps of the Capitol to urge recognition of Lithuanian independence. Secret Service officials said other demonstrations yesterday drew 150 protesters to the White House and 700 to Lafayette Square.

Gorbachev Warns Estonia To Halt Secession Moves

SOVIET, From A1

tween Lithuanian officials and one of Gorbachev's key aides, Politburo member Alexander Yakovlev, negotiations between the Baltic republics and Moscow on the mechanics of independence have not yet started. A planned meeting between Lithuanian negotiators and the Soviet interior minister was called off today without explanation.

Lithuania's deputy prime minister, Romualdas Ozolas, told journalists that he had also been unsuccessful in arranging a meeting with Defense Minister Dmitri Yazov. Ozolas returned to the Lithuanian capital, Vilnius, tonight after talks with lower-level Soviet officials.

According to Vilnius radio, the Lithuanian government sent a telegram to Yazov today calling for discussions on the subject of Lithuanian deserters from the Soviet army seized by soldiers in Vilnius last week. The Lithuanian legislature also appealed to the International Red Cross to prevent the "abduction" of young Lithuanians by the Soviet army.

The state-controlled Soviet news media have been keeping up a daily barrage against Lithuania for its declaration of independence, hinting at the possibility that Gorbachev could dissolve its legislature and rule by presidential decree unless Vilnius backs down. In recent days, however, commentaries have appeared in some liberal newspapers criticizing the display of military force on the streets of the Lithuanian capital.

The radical weekly Moscow News said that the military had been deployed in Lithuania at the



ARNOLD RUUTEL
... phone call from Gorbachev

request of the pro-Moscow faction of the local Communist Party, a splinter group that enjoys little support from the local population. It said that the show of military power did not advance any of the aims set out in the Soviet constitution.

Over the past two weeks, Soviet soldiers have been posted outside a number of key public buildings in Vilnius, including Communist Party headquarters, the city's main printing plant and the prosecutor's office. Thousand of extra troops have been sent into the city.

A commentary in the government newspaper Izvestia signed by three Soviet legislators said the show of Soviet military force could be counterproductive by encouraging the notion that Lithuania is an "occupied" country.

Special correspondent Elizabeth Shogren in Tallinn contributed to this report.